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DE RUEHSG #0213 0651516
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R 061516Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4587
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3829
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2327
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1340
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0737
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1977
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 6027
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4276
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2203
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000213

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

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SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - MARCH 6

Leading Stories

1. The government is open to implementing yet another economic reactivation plan given the most recent economic statistics, which show the lowest growth rates in the last ten years. Adimark survey shows a 58% rate of approval for President Bachelet, the highest since 2006.

U.S.-Related News

2. OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza stated in Montevideo the need to resolve the 1962 resolution that excluded Cuba from the organization and said he was party to facilitating a rapprochement between Cuba and the United States (El Mercurio, 3/6).

3. A 63-year old American tourist committed suicide by jumping off the cruise ship "Carnival Splendid" in northern Chile. The tourist was traveling with his wife and disappeared overnight. He left a letter. Two Chilean Navy ships and a helicopter are searching for the body in a 1,000 square kilometer area. The cruise ship also assisted, but today continued its trip further north (All dailies, 3/6).

Benefit of FTAs

4. Foreign Affairs International Economic Relations General Director Carlos Furche believes that the free trade agreements signed by Chile will help shield the country from protectionist policies that tend to emerge during difficult financial times such as today's crisis. Furche said these accords provide the framework for ad hoc committees to resolve an array of specific issues and also generate "a capital of mutual trust" that is valuable in hard times (El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, circ. 129,000, 3/6).

Favorable Polling

5. Adimark poll shows that Bachelet has a 58% approval rating. This is the highest level since April 2006. The survey also indicates an improvement in the perception of all the president's personal attributes: leadership--62.5%; beloved--82.2%; and her ability to face crisis--69.5%. 54% agree with how she and her financial team are managing the economy. Foreign Affairs Minister Foxley was again among the best rated ministers. But the highest increase was for Finance Minister Andres Velasco, whose approval had been gradually increasing (La Tercera, conservative, independent,

circ. 101,000; La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent,
circ, 4,200, 3/6).

Transantiago

16. The report of Chamber of Deputies' committee investigating the
IDB loan to the Transantiago severely questioned the role played by
ministers Andres Velasco (Finance) and Rene Cortazar (Transportation)
in securing that loan (La Tercera, 3/6).

SIMONS